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# Bacharach and Burg Stahleck, 1817

Peter Black and Elizabeth Jacklin



Fig. 1 *Bacharach and Burg Stahleck*, 1817, watercolour, gouache and gum arabic with scratching out, 20.4 x 32.2 cm; mounted on board (W 642; The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, GLAHA 42480)

The large and celebrated group of coloured drawings inspired by Turner's 1817 tour of the Rhine between Mainz and Cologne and purchased by Walter Fawkes is now widely dispersed. The existence of a watercolour in this group depicting Bacharach and Burg Stahleck (fig. 1) has long been recorded. It was listed among the works in the Fawkes collection by Turner's first biographer, Walter Thornbury, in 1862. It was lent by Walter Fawkes' descendant, Ayscough Fawkes, to the Royal Academy winter exhibition of 1889, and exhibited under the title *Bacharach and Stahleck*. It was described with some detail in the catalogue: 'In the centre of the picture is the wall of a town, with a road leading through an arch at the base of a tower, which forms part of it; farther off is seen a ruined castle on a hill; a glimpse of the river appears on the l. in the middle distance; on the r. a terrace with a vineyard above it, and the wall running up a steep hill; light clouds, with afternoon sunlight on the town; foreground in shadow. Size 7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> by 12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.'<sup>1</sup> Sir Walter Armstrong's *Turner* (1902) also lists the work, describing it along the same lines as the 1889 catalogue. He also notes its inclusion in the Fawkes sale at Christie's in 1890. Wilton's catalogue raisonné of the watercolours (1979) includes the work under the same title, *Bacharach and Stahleck*, giving its medium, dimensions and provenance. There is no illustration and it is noted as untraced. Cecilia Powell's *Turner's*

*Rivers of Europe: The Rhine, Meuse and Mosel* (1991) includes an image of the work (p. 33; 'present whereabouts unknown'). Tate's *Turner Worldwide* database has more recently listed it as untraced.

An important clue to the present location of this work, however, may be found in Wilton's record of its later provenance, namely 'J.A. McCallum'. The print collector and Glasgow graduate Dr James Alexander McCallum (1862–1948) donated his collection totalling 4,000 prints and drawings to The Hunterian, University of Glasgow, in two gifts in 1939 and 1948. He spoke of his collection as if it consisted entirely of prints. Indeed he gave the nucleus of an important old master collection, carefully buying works to complement the collection's existing strengths. As a collector of drawings, he focused on British artists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and he singled out his Turner as a work he wished to be kept in its gilded frame (since discarded) rather than boxed. The Hunterian's sizable print room also holds an important collection of Turner prints, some given by McCallum, but mostly stemming from the important collection of Arthur Acland Allen (1868–1939) which his widow distributed in 1940. (Allen had earlier given Turner prints to the British Museum and to the Tate Gallery.) McCallum purchased *Bacharach and Burg Stahleck* from Agnew's watercolour exhibition in 1944, and

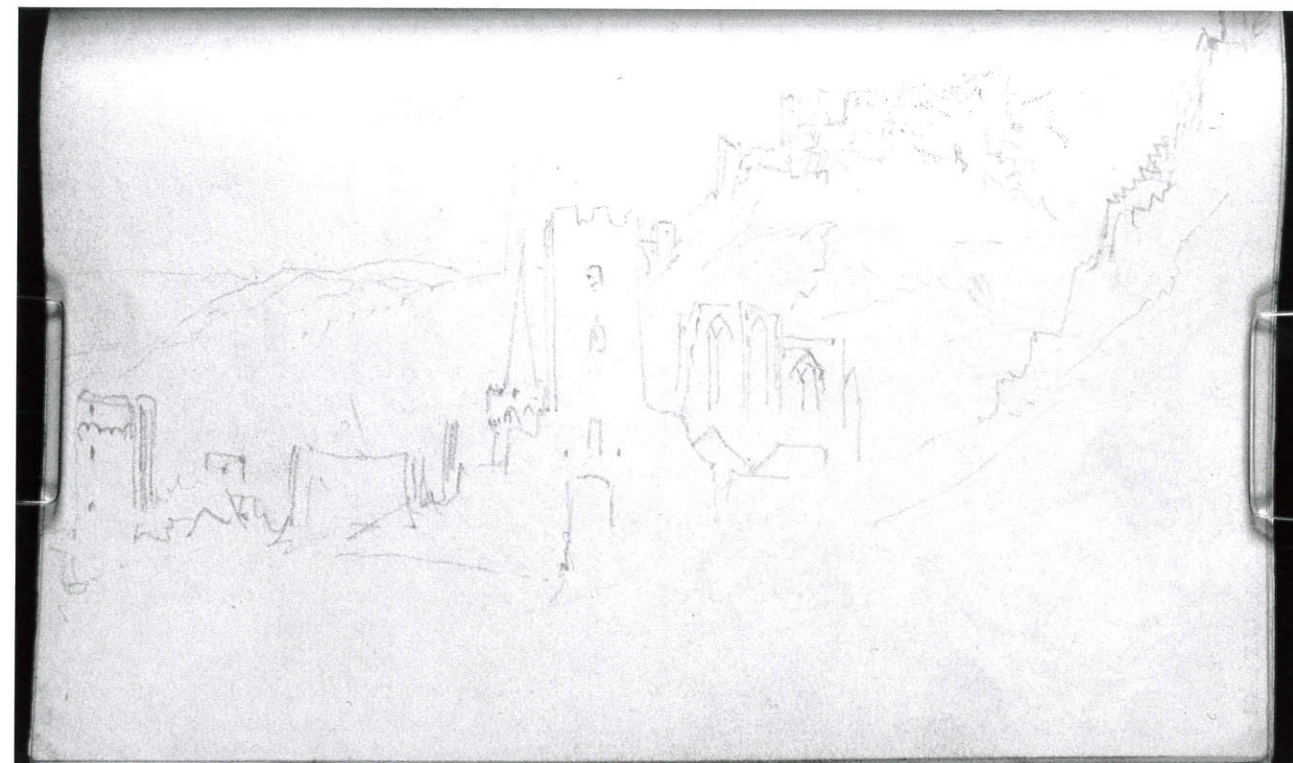


Fig. 2 *Bacharach and Burg Stahleck*, looking Upstream from the West Bank to the Zehnttor, pencil, 1817 (from the *Waterloo and Rhine* sketchbook, TB CLX 61a; D12820; © Tate, London 2014)

it formed part of his bequest to the Hunterian in 1948. However, the link with the Hunterian, implied by the provenance from McCallum, was not made in subsequent Turner literature, meaning many lovers of Turner's art have remained unaware of its present location in a major public collection.

Famous since medieval times as a production and trading centre for wine (it is said to derive its name from 'Bacchi ara', the altar of Bacchus), Bacharach was also a major Rhine toll station. Turner presents the scene that faced travellers as they approached the town coming upstream from Koblenz and reached the Zehnttor, or Tithes Gate, and the extensive town walls. Above the town stands a fortified castle, Burg Stahleck, in ruins in Turner's time but now restored. To the left of the gate can be seen the parish church with its spire, while to the right of the gate are the Gothic ruins of the Wernerkapelle. This highly picturesque view was depicted by many artists of Turner's generation, both before and after the demolition of the Zehnttor in about 1830.

Turner returned to Bacharach as a subject at various points during his career; a related, rather generalised, view (with the Rhine in the foreground) features in a vignette engraved by Edward Finden of 1832–3 for *The Works of Lord Byron*, for which there is a watercolour design at Vassar College (R 418; W 1222). The Fitzwilliam's *Bacharach* from the 1840s (W 1324) also focuses on one of the roads into Bacharach, with a view of another defensive tower (still standing) that meets travellers coming down the Steeg valley to the south-west (which lies behind the hillside fortifications on the right of the Glasgow scene).

Characterised by a lively use of watercolour and gouache, the 1817 Rhine drawings were in the past said to have been made on the spot, a view contradicted by the existence of pencil sketches related to most of the drawings,

many in the *Waterloo and Rhine* sketchbook.<sup>2</sup> Such is the case with the drawing discussed here; among the sketches of Bacharach that Turner made during his tour is a quick pencil sketch recording his first view of the town as he travelled upstream by road (fig. 2).

As with the other drawings in the series, the sheet was prepared by Turner with a grey wash. The grey is occasionally visible along the edges, for example, but shows clearly in the sky to the right of the diagonal line which divides the fresher clear air, coming from the right, after a shower, from the dense blue above the receding clouds at top left. There are no visible traces of chalk or pencil underlying the composition; outlines are emphasised with thin lines of dark wash, for example the coach passing through the gate. The foreground is brushed very broadly, in dense greens and browns, with palings at the edge of the road on the right suggested by scratching with the butt of the brush. Highlights appear in white on the sunlit architecture and in pale ochre gouache, for example the patch of sunlight in front of the gateway and on the jagged edges of the town wall as it climbs the hillside to the right. The greens and blues of the distant hills have a pervasive granular effect from sponging or scratching out; the damp sunlit air in the steep valley which leads from the right to the centre of the town is marked by a patch where Turner has nearly gone back to the white of the paper.

## Notes

- 1 *Exhibition of Works by the Old Masters, and by Deceased Masters of the British School; including a Special Selection from the works of Frank Holl, R.A. and a Collection of Watercolour Drawings by Joseph M. W. Turner, R.A.: Winter Exhibition*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 1889 (no. 35).
- 2 Cecilia Powell, *Turner's Rivers of Europe: The Rhine, Meuse and Mosel*, Tate, London, 1991, pp. 32–4.